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# OT 611 Exegesis of Exodus

Brian D. Russell

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## Syllabus

**Course:** OT611 01 (SP 2009)

**Title:** Exegesis of Exodus

**Hours:** 3.00

**Published:** Yes, on 11/28/2008

**Prerequisites:**

NT(IFS)51x and OT501 and OT520

**Department:** Old Testament

**Faculty:** Dr. Brian Russell



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Office: FC

SPO:

### Meetings:

During 02/09/2009 to 05/22/2009 on Tuesday from 9:00a to 11:40a in EXLEXL.

**Maximum Registration:** 30

**Catalog Description:** This course explores selected exegetical issues in the book of Exodus and provides students with opportunities to apply original language tools to the book's strategic passages. The focus will be on developing appropriate interpretive skills for the pastoral ministry. (May be taken by students in M.A. programs not requiring Hebrew, by special arrangement with the professor.)

Objectives:

OT 6

### Asbury Theological Seminary-Florida OT 611 Exegesis of Exodus Spring 2009

Instructor: Brian D. Russell, Ph.D. Prerequisites: IBS-1/OT501/OT520

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Office Hours: Tuesdays noon-1 PM

Other times by appointment. I am available to help you maximize your learning and transformation. Simply ask.

*"What other life can there be without the knowledge of the Scriptures, for through these Christ himself, who is the life of the faithful becomes known?" – Jerome*

*"Apply the whole of yourself to the text; apply the whole of the text to yourself." - Bengel*

**Exodus is a foundational book in the Christian Bible. In it, two of the Old Testament's principal salvific events (Exodus and Sinai) are narrated. In light of these developments, the text engages the reader with multi-faceted portrait of God, a vision of the peculiar vocation of the people of God, and an account of Moses, the servant of Yahweh. In Exodus, God liberates Israel from bondage and unleashes them to exist as a *missional community that reflects God's character for the nations.***

**As many of you know, Exodus as a whole and Exodus 15:1-21 in particular were the focus of much of my doctoral studies. I love the book of Exodus, and I look forward to studying it with you for next several months.**

**As described in the Catalog, students should expect to spend 2.5-3.0 hours outside of class for every hour in class. Please plan your schedules accordingly.**

#### I. Course description

This course explores selected exegetical issues in the Book of Exodus and provides students with opportunities to apply original-language tools to the book's strategic passages. The focus will be on developing appropriate interpretive

skills for the pastoral ministry.

## II. Course objectives (Shared by OT department)

Upon successful completion of this course, each participant will be able to:

- A. Confirm and refine by recourse to the Hebrew text of Exodus literary analysis of longer units previously studied in translation,
- B. Analyze the significance of the grammar and sentence structure of brief pericopes using primarily the Hebrew text,
- C. Present the significance of key terms in a given passage by using basic original language word-study tools and techniques,
- D. Identify the function of a given, brief passage of Exodus in the framework of its immediate context, its function in the literary flow of the book and in the section of the canon within which it appears,
- E. Situate the thematic emphases of specific passages of Exodus in the context of the Old Testament's unfolding message and in the context of the Bible as a whole,
- F. Demonstrate the impact of representative exegetical methods on the study of Exodus, employing relevant scholarly literature, and situating one's own interpretation in the on going discussion of biblical interpretation,
- G. Illustrate the contribution of exegetical study of the Hebrew text to biblical exposition, instruction, theological reflection, and spiritual formation in order to construct an appropriation of the passage that is integrative and coherent.

## III. Course procedures and requirements

A. Class presentations will model direct study of Exodus, relying primarily on interpretive skills introduced in OT 501 and IBS-1. After a survey of the contents and issues in the interpretation of Exodus has been completed, class sessions will walk systematically through the units of Exodus, highlighting specific passages that make notable contributions to the meaning of each unit. Grammatical, linguistic, historical, literary, and theological details of selected passages will be highlighted in order to illustrate the chosen pericope's contribution to the message of the larger unit. Students will be required to read selected sections of Exodus in preparation for each class period. A short assignment will accompany each selection that highlights the use of a particular exegetical skill. *These early assignments are considered to be examples of formative evaluation. As such a letter grade will not be assigned.* These assignments will help you to develop skills that will be evaluated in a summative way in the final weeks of the course. Such assignments encompass **Modules 1-6**. As part of these modules, practice writing succinct thesis statements and explore secondary literature. *It is assumed that each student will be conversant with the content of the commentaries of Fretheim and Enns for each of the assigned passages.*

B. Students will prepare a critical book review of Michael Walzer's, *Exodus and Revolution*. Specific directions will follow. **Due as part of Module 8 on May \_.**

C. **Module 7.** Students will write two brief exegetical papers on assigned texts from Exodus, utilizing the skills acquired in OT 501 and IBS-1. These papers should be double-spaced, typed, and no more than 1200 words in length. The paper will essentially provide answers to the following questions: 1) What is the subject of this text? 2) What is said about the subject? 3) What is the purpose of what is said? (More specific instructions will be provided at the time of the assignments along with several samples) The paper should present the student's observations of key grammatical elements. Also where appropriate to the specific pericope, students should show sensitivity to socio-historical, canonical, and theological issues arising from the text itself. Critical engagement with secondary sources will be assumed. **Students may turn as many of these projects as they wish. In such cases, I will "count" only the two highest scores.** The passages that will be considered include: Exod 19:3-6, 20:8-11, 21:1-11, 32:7-14, and 40:34-38.

D. Students will write a final paper on a pericope to be chosen from the list that will be provided later in the term (at minimum the list will include the five passages worked on in Module 7). The purpose of this paper is to provide the student an opportunity to synthesize his or her newly acquired skills by allowing a direct demonstration of them. Secondary sources may be consulted, beginning with the preliminary bibliography provided at the end of the syllabus. These papers should be 2500 words or less in length. **Due on May \_\_ as the final part of Module 8**

## IV. Textbooks

A. Required specifically for OT 611.

John I. Durham. *Exodus*. WBC. Waco: Word, 1987.

Terrence E. Fretheim. *Exodus*. Interpretation. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991.

Michael Walzer. *Exodus and Revolution*

T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2002.

B. Required in previous courses (OT 501).

Arnold, Bill and John Choi. *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Cambridge University Press.

Elliger, K., and W. Rudolph, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1967-77.

Holladay, William L. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971.

Scott, William R. *A Simplified Guide to BHS*. Berkley, Calif.: BIBAL, 1987.

Seow, C. L. *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*. Rev. ed. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

C. Recommended:

BibleWorks 4.0 or higher (*Hermeneutika*)

D. Recommended Commentaries and Studies:

See bibliography in Class folder

## V. Student evaluation

A. Short Assignments 15%

B. Book Review of *Exodus and Revolution*\* 20%

C. Exegetical Papers (two highest grades)\* 20%

D. Final paper \* 45%

## Note on Grading:

1) I subscribe to a theory of grading that uses the designations *formative* and *summative* for grading. Formative grading essentially allows me to offer you feedback without the necessity of assigning a letter grade. Theoretically, this should allow you to learn the material without fear/pressure of "getting it right the first time." Only in summative grading is a letter grade assigned. In this class, those items marked above (\*) will be graded in summative fashion. The various short assignments in the first half of the semester will be marked credit/no credit accordingly. These early assignments will allow you to practice exegetical skills and allow me to offer you substantive feedback *so that you can shine on the summative assignments at the end of the term*. In other words, I work under the assumption that your work will improve over the course and thus only your *best* work will be assigned a letter grade.

2) I pledge that I will return your assignments within one week from the due date for a given assignment.

## Statement of Grades (from Catalog):

Regarding the assignment of grades, let each one remember that the Seminary defines an "A" as "Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives."

Grades in the B range are commendable and demonstrate typical graduate level achievement.

## Incompletes (from Catalog)

A grade of "incomplete" will be given only in the case of an "unforeseeable emergency." *This does not include church work or problems in other courses at ATS.* (This is policy per *Catalog*).

## VI. Outline of Modules

The course is divided into discrete units or modules, each of which will occupy about a week of class time. Students will be required to read the assigned sections of the biblical text, complete a brief assignment, and read the relevant portions of the commentaries as part of each module.

*I reserve the right to revise the following assignments depending on the needs of the class.*

## Module 0 Class Introductions (in class on 2/12)

## Module 1 Overview of the Book of Exodus Due 2/19

1) a. Read the introductory sections to Enns's commentary on Exodus.

b. In *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, read the following three articles: i. "Exodus, Date of", 258-72, ii. "Exodus, Book of", 249-58, and iii. "Hermeneutics", 387-401.

**Prepare a one page (single-spaced) reflection that contains two elements – your principal learning from the reading and key questions that you have from the reading. This exercise should prepare you for a substantive time of discussion in small groups and as a whole class.**

2) **Review Hebrew notes from OT501.** Pay particular attention to the syntax associated with construct chains, prepositional phrases, and verbal forms. What questions do you have about employing the Hebrew language in exegetical work?

## Module 2 Grammatical Analysis (Exod 1-2) Due 2/26

Review *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, particularly pp. 7-20, 24-53, and 54-68, i.e., Nouns, Verbs, and Prepositions. This should essentially be a quick review of OT501.

Complete a grammatical analysis of all nouns, prepositions and verbs in Exod 1:8-9 and 11. Compare several English translations (NRSV, NIV, NLT, NASB, etc) as part of the process. You will find essential agreement in most cases (i.e., you could apply the same grammatical label), but do note areas where differences arise and explain differences in terms of the grammar. Make sure that you understand the meaning of the various categories. The key to this exercise is not *merely* being able to label/parse a word, but to better understand the passage by means of the grammatical analysis.

### **Module 3 Source and Redaction Criticism (Exod 2:23-7:6) Due 3/5**

- a) Read the essay on "Source Criticism" by David Baker (p. 798-805) in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*.
- b) Read Exod 2:23-7:6.

c) Prepare a grammatical analysis of Exod 6:3.

d) The "two" call/commissions of Moses (3:1-4:17 and 6:2-7:6) are foundational in the source division of the Pentateuch. Specifically the dual explanation for the divine name Yhwh and the fact that Yhwh is used in the so-called "J" source from Gen 2:4 onward. The question: Why are there two explanations for the revelation of God's personal name? Source critics suggested the presence of two sources: E in chapter 3 and P in Chapter six. Further complicating these chapters is the presence of J material in Exod 3-4 as well. (See source division document provided separately in this module) Notice that regardless of how one divides these chapters into sources (or if one rejects the enterprise all together), the redactional question remains: What is the function of these two call stories? This week will provide an opportunity to assess exegetically the source critical claims for the two call/commission narratives of Moses. Does such a claim survive a close reading of the text? If not, how does one explain the similarities as well as the differences? One scholar sees artistry; another will posit discrete sources.

Spend of the bulk of your class time this week studying 3:1-4:17 and 6:2-7:6. Compare/Contrast these dual commissions of Moses. Why are there two narratives? What role does each play in the Exodus story? In one single spaced page, succinctly summarize your findings and on the basis of your own close reading of the text make a case for or against a source critical analysis of these materials. As part of your study, (at minimum) make sure that you read relevant sections of Durham and Fretheim. Be prepared to engage in substantive conversation in class. Begin your paper with a 2-3 sentence purpose statement that serves as a synthesis of your work. Be succinct. Substantive. Interpretive.

### **Module 4 Word Study (Exod 7:7-11:10) Due 3/12**

- a) Read Exod 7:7-11:10.

b) Complete and turn in a grammatical analysis of Exod 9:16. You will be able to make use of this in the next assignment.

c) I trust that you have had ample instruction on word study method in Concise Greek, Survey of Biblical Hebrew, and perhaps even IBS-1 (depending on your instructor). Study the recurrences of the "hard heart" motif in Exodus. Thus, I am asking for a study of a limited sample. I want you to focus your attention to the immediate context of each occurrence in Exodus. Note that this theme begins in Exod 4:21 and does not end until Exod 14. Also, take care that you find *all* recurrences (hint: there are three different Hebrew verbs that are used). Here are some sample questions that come to mind: What does it mean that pharaoh's heart is hardened? Who does the hardening? What is the purpose of this theme in Exodus? Is there development in the theme or does it remain the same?

(Most of the time this question turns into some form of the free-will versus determinism debate. As you think through the exegetical issues, observe to what degree your own theological presuppositions about freedom of the will influence your exegesis.)

In one single spaced page, sketch out your understanding of this theme in summary form. Use resources at your disposal including: Fretheim/Durham, *TWOT*\*(w/BibleWorks), and relevant articles in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* ("Egypt, Egyptians," "Signs and Wonders," and "Hardness of Heart."). I would also recommend (if you haven't already) exploring resources accessible through our library's Restricted Databases. Use ATLA to find articles on the passages under consideration.

### **Module 5 Liturgy and Narrative (Exod 12:1-13:16) Due 3/19**

Study carefully 12:1-13:16. The following questions may prove helpful in your analysis: How precisely and specifically does it function in the wider context of the book of Exodus? What are the emphases of these verses? What is the effect of the interplay between narrative reporting and liturgical instruction? Study the use of the theme of remembrance. As usual dialogue with Durham, Fretheim, and relevant articles in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. Your summary of findings should not exceed a single-spaced page.

### **Module 6 Poetry and Narrative (Exod 13:17-15:1-21) Due 3/26**

- a) Complete a grammatical analysis of Exod 14:31. This is the final analysis. Make it your best.

b) You have choices for the main project for this module. Do any one of the following:

(1) Describe how Exod 15:1-21 functions as a climax and summary of Exod 1:1-14:31? (2) Compare / contrast the presentation of the Exodus/Red Sea event in 13:17-14:31 with that of Exod 15:1-21? What are possible explanations / implications of your findings? (3) Read the Baal cycle – suggest parallels between the Baal cycle and Exod 15:1-21. Again, summarize your findings in one single-spaced page. Note that all three of these suggested projects are slightly different forms of exegesis. #1 is more of a synthetic project. It will help you to bring together your study of Exod 1-14. #2 is closer to a historical-critical reading though again *a close reading of the text is essential*, and #3 is a comparative religion assignment. For those interested in “contextual” theology, #3 is for you. You can find the Baal epic in a number of sources: <http://www.baal.com/baal/about/BaalEpic.shtml>  
<http://www.piney.com/BaalEpic.html>

Also you can find the epic in a number of print sources: William Hallo, ed., *Contexts in Scripture* or Simon Parker, ed., *Narrative Ugaritic Poetry*.

#### **Module 7 Practice of Exegesis (Exodus 19-40)**

**(Students must complete at least two of the following five projects)**

Exod 19:3-6 Due 4/9

Exod 20:8-11 Due 4/16

Exod 21:1-11 Due 4/23

Exod 32:7-14 Due 4/30

Exod 40:34-38 Due 5/7

#### **Module 8 Exodus and Tradition// Final Exegetical Paper**

Book Review of Michael Walzer's *Exodus and Revolution* **Due 5/14**

Final Exegetical Paper **Due 5/21**